

THE KING'S WORK.

A SERMON

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BY

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"I must walk to-day and to-morrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."—LUKE xiii., 33.

HOWEVER carelessly you choose to read the New Testament, you cannot but be impressed with the calm steadiness of the last march to Jerusalem. "I must go to-day, to-morrow, and the day following; for a prophet cannot perish out of Jerusalem." He must go, for he is about his Father's business.

Annas and Caiaphas do not expect him, do not want him. "He will not be here this time," they say, "to upset and confuse everything. He is no fool. We have given him a warning that his room is better than his company." For such men always put themselves in the place of him they judge. Caiaphas always thinks of Jesus as governed by Caiaphas' own motive. So, when people are guessing to-day about a public man, Will he do this, will he do that? you can see what the guesser is by his solution of the problem. But, in the great crisis of the world, Jesus moves on his own line, led by his own motive. To the surprise of all and the indignation of all, he appears again at the city, as surely as the feast comes round. "It cannot be otherwise. I must go." It is just as a gallant officer takes his column under fire, though he is to be the first man to fall, and knows he is.

Such is the central example of perfect devotion to the work God gives us to do,—work for that kingdom in which we are all citizens, and of which God is the King. It is one of the great compensations of our time for some of its supposed losses of faith, that it can see more easily than any other time has seen what this business of the King is, in which we are all enlisted. To our time there ought to be no danger that man or woman should fall back into an imbecile regret that God has no work for either of them to do. Every morning wakes us up to a life so large that the mys-

tery is, rather, how the fifteen waking hours shall begin to answer its requisitions. Every man now sees the King's work every hour. The danger is only that he shall be attracted to too many parts of it, and shall not pull steadily at his own rope. For the inter-union of nations and tribes, and the ready communication between land and land, compel every man to see that he is his brother's keeper, and that his failure involves wide calamity. It brings the corresponding encouragement, that duty faithfully done is done in the King's work, and for a sphere no less than the whole world.

In conversation in a literary circle the other day, I heard the opinion expressed that the delicate work of those old essay-writers, who described with an exquisite finish the amusing niceties or pettinesses of village life, would never again command the interest of the great body of readers. Such detail as you find in Washington Irving's *Sketch Book*, in Miss Mitford's *Sketches of Our Village* and *Belford Regis*, or even the nicer studies of the detail of life by Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt, or some of the descriptions most admired in the *Spectator*, are now considered by the younger generation as petty rather than fine. The opinion I heard expressed was this: that in Young America and Young England every youth and every maiden now feel what it is to be "citizens of the world." The English lad knows that the morning drum-beat of England is all the time resounding, as the sun rises on her different lands. The American lad knows that his kindred "vex every ocean" with their trade, push their gigantic game beyond the Arctic and Antarctic Circles; and that there is no dialect so barbarous but that men of his race have translated into it the oracles of his faith. This girl will be married, when her lover is well established in Japan. That minister mailed a pamphlet, which was asked for, to the Griqua diamond-fields. Your ladies' club in the vestry heard Miss Twitchell tell how the Papapigo girls made hard gingerbread at Hampton; and the young woman, who sang your Christmas hymns so prettily at the Unity, is to-day teaching Spanish children their catechism, under the shadow of the Andes. This thing is happening all the time. So there is not the old danger that people will be eaten up by the conceit of Nazareth, or will immure themselves in hermitages in Bethlehem.

In the analogies of war, the duty of working for the cause is perfectly understood. The great word "honor," in a

soldier's interpretation of it, means that he subordinates himself entirely to the cause. Do you remember that little English poem which describes the martyrdom of a soldier of the Buffs in China? They had been taken prisoners by the Chinese, he and some Sepoy companions. All of them were bidden to perform Ko-tow — that is, to touch the forehead to the ground — before some idol. The Sepoys did it readily enough, and were let off. The English soldier would not do it.

“Let swarthy heathen cringe and kneel,
An English lad must die.”

And he died. But I do not dare tell how many noble men that death of that unknown private fired to manhood. Regiments marching to war in our rebellion took up those words, took them to heart, and carried them to duty. The honor of the soldier was represented in the sacrifice. He must be about the business which is so much larger than his own life. And men learn in war to keep this idea before them always. Personal inconvenience takes its own proper and insignificant place. I remember an anecdote of twenty years ago, which has quite another tone, regarding one of the most finical and elegant young men I had ever known. I have not seen him since he was the most exquisitely dressed, the most elegantly nurtured, the most precisely ordered young man of my acquaintance about town. The clock struck for him. The gun fired. He was at his duty, and was placed on the staff of one of our most dashing leaders, perhaps because he knew all languages, and would entertain the French princes, if need were, without a slip in his accent. But the work of war is not talking with French princes. He had not been on duty a month, when at midnight he was summoned to direct a confidential party in a rapid movement to secure some contraband arms. The story of his soliloquy on his return has hung to me like a watchword, precisely because of the triviality of the detail. Soaked to the skin, covered with dirt from tip to toe, hungry, cold, cross, the elegant pet of society dragged himself upstairs to go to his bed at sunrise. His meditations were overheard through the thin plank of the barrack. “So, Alfred,” he said to himself, “this is war. You’ve had nothing to eat. You’ve had nothing to drink. Nobody saw you. Nobody thanks you. Nobody will thank you. You’ve caught a cold that will keep you barking a month. You’ve spoiled a good suit of clothes. You’ve ruined a good pair

of boots. You are frozen and hungry and mad. Yes, Alfred, — but you got the guns!”

No man who has served in the army will fail to appreciate his satisfaction and the point of the homely anecdote. The work in hand was done. Who cared for the cost or sacrifice? Of such experiences, of which the war was full, the moral value is in an inverse proportion to the importance of the end secured. It is not when the fall of Vicksburg is won by a night's watching that you learn the lesson. You do not need any lesson there. Then you see that the game is worth the candle. But it was in the lesser things that men learned how they also serve who only stand and wait.

But that sense of honor is not to be confined to soldiers. Eugène Sue, in his terrible novel, *The Wandering Jew*, made us all familiar, a generation ago, with the absolute fineness of organization in which the Jesuit community, one and all, are trained to obey the orders of their general. In the midst of the terror of the book, in the horror of that sense of an awful fate entangling and controlling every action of every person, as the snake in the Laocoön controls every limb of each child, the one redeeming and helpful element was the vision the book gave you of the consecration of noble men and women to a great cause,—a cause outside themselves, and vastly larger than themselves, for which they were willing to live, for which they were ready to die, if it were God's will. The excellence of the book, all that which was not sensational or morbid in it, was this success in transferring the notion of honor from half-feudal surroundings, from the association of armies or of courts, to what men call the mean details of common life. The post-boy who harnessed a horse was on honor: the lackey was on honor, as he knocked at the door, and waited for an answer to his message. The method of the Jesuit Order, so ingenious and so sure to preserve itself, is well worth the study of any man of religion or any man of affairs who would learn how to co-ordinate men with each other, and how to assign to each his convenient place. And, when the faithful companion, no matter how low his grade in the hierarchy, feels that it is God's will he is doing, then nothing can be more grand than such devotion. But, when he has advanced so far as to see that it is the carnal ambition of men very low in their ambition, which orders him here or there as a chessman in their game, nothing can be more awful than

his slavery. Of this awful picture, the redeeming side is in the possible devotion of man to a great cause. Because he is God's child, he is willing to do God's work. Because God's will is to be done by God's children, God's children volunteer. The King's work must go forward; and to the King's work are their lives devoted.

Where Ignatius Loyola stopped short, content with forming his little Society of Jesus, with its various centres, head-centres, and a general, Jesus Christ himself never stopped. "I go away," he said. The King would take command in person. Such devotion to the Father's work and will as he had shown, he expected that we could show, and it was all he wanted us to show. Such lifting this world upward as he had tried, not vainly, he believed that we should carry forward. Just such devotion to a cause as the soldier shows to his flag in battle, as the Jesuit shows to the poor paper order of his general, Jesus expects us all to show to that steady, heavenward progress of the world, which, as he shows, is God's purpose and command. "I must go about my Father's business," he says; "and you must go about it. As he has sent me into the world, even so have I, also, sent you into the world."

"The King's work must go forward. There is no stop possible. If it is in my hand, entrusted to me, I must carry it forward." Well for any man or woman who, early in life, works out this formula for the place or duty which is assigned to him in men's affairs. Duty is no separate business, no part of my self-culture, no service for which I am to be paid at the ticket office of heaven. Duty is my part of the infinite service, which an infinite number of God's children must render before God's kingdom comes. It is lifted from a little personal affair to its own place in close relationship with the movement of the universe. It seems to me not hard to make even children understand this, and enter into the enthusiasm of work thus rendered in the common cause for the Father of us all. Let the girl know that she does not do this merely to please her mother or to oblige her father, but that she counts as one in the great company who are pushing forward the King's work,—she also is an officer in the army, and to her also has he assigned work to be done. I shall never forget the enthusiasm of a young friend whom I had asked to carry forward some part of our work here for the families of soldiers absent in the war,—not a duty with any romance attached,—nothing which you would

print in a newspaper or a biography,—the humblest of ministrations, in snuffy tenement houses of discomfort or need. But she said to me afterward, “I walked on air as I left you, for I was in the service also.” She felt how great a thing it is to be fellow-workman with the King, to serve at his side in the place he has appointed.

Of this loyal service in the King’s work, to-day teaches one of the central lessons. It needs consecration,—yes! determination,—yes! One must go to Jerusalem, though Jerusalem means Calvary and crucifixion. One must march to-day, to-morrow, and the day following. And then, when one looks down on the city, when one sees it in its glory and beauty, one may be, often will be, mocked by a false triumph. Here they are cheering him behind and before. Here are others coming out to meet him with the same enthusiasm. And it is not false enthusiasm: it is true. And it seems to mean so much! How easy to see that picture with the side-lights of our own time! I remember, to look back twenty years again, that it was my duty to preach in Providence on the 21st of July, 1861, when we knew that the first battle of the war was going on. I was speaking to the wives and daughters of fifty or a hundred men of the First Rhode Island Infantry, which regiment we knew was hotly engaged while we were in church. We woke Monday morning to pæans of victory. All had opened so well! A disgraced and defeated enemy was by that time in flight to Richmond. From hour to hour, as I came to Boston and afterward, these tidings of encouragement came in,—so many palm branches thrown before our feet,—till, at the office where I was working here in Boston, at one o’clock, there entered one of your merchant princes,—one of the men who has reliable private advices,—to tell us of the crash of Bull Run, that all our proud army was flung back in flight, and that Washington was swarming with stragglers and run-aways.

I will not say it is always so; but it is so very, very often. The apparent triumph has to fade in failure before real victory comes. The French proverb says, it is true, that it is only the first step which costs. But nobody would ever say so, one who knows life in its reality and seriousness. Life has proved a thousand times that the triumph of Palm Sunday, the victory of the first step, is a false triumph and a

false victory. It is only he who endures to the end who is saved. And he who is on the King's work expects and knows that he will meet the King's enemies. On Monday, the King's Son will meet in his father's temple money-changers and sellers of sacrifice, men who sell worship for money. They are the lineal descendants, the present representatives of that half of the patriarch Jacob which was cheat and truckster. They made his father's house a den of thieves. Tuesday, the Son of the King will meet capacious priests, to ask who gave him his authority. He will meet crafty Sadducees who would catch him in his talk. He will silence these, only to meet others who would embroil him with the governor. They would be glad indeed to lay hands on him. It is Wednesday of the same week on which the King's Son tells these wondering brethren of his of the certain crash and fall of the glory that they see around them in this false Jerusalem. It is Thursday on which the lines draw tighter and tighter. Judas is dealing with Caiaphas and his crew; and the King's Son knows that he is thus wounded even in the house of his friends. Friday dawns, and sees him a prisoner, bound. The cock crows at sunrise; and he turns to look his reproaches on the faithless Peter who has denied him. The sun sets on Friday, on the tomb in which he is buried. Such is the week which follows your triumph of that beginning. And that test of our companions and partners, that test of ourselves, will come most likely to you and me. You must not say, "I will volunteer for the King's work, if the King will give me work which is distinguished and easy and agreeable." The stage-manager, who was asked to arrange a play by amateurs for some great charity, told me that all the ladies wanted to play Juliet, and all the gentlemen to play Romeo. The King's work admits none of that sort of volunteering. We must not say we will go and fight, if the King will assure us that there are no enemies or if we may fight in iron-clads. It is because there are enemies and are no iron-clads that the King needs his children. And these children — if the false triumph of Olivet do not turn their heads with vanity, — if they do not think the prize won because children cry "Hosanna" — may, with every new day, carry out the King's work more skilfully and win his purpose more completely. One could not but think of all this on Thursday. Mr. Brooks described to us the brilliant opening of his Union Reading Room, he described next its conflict with Pharisees and Sadducees and doctors learned in that

dried-up law ; and not till then did we see it come out strong, flat-footed, and manly on the working plane of real life. One could trace the same steps in Mr. Tilden's allusion to temperance reformation. That reform has a plenty of Olivet triumphs, mass-meetings, and wayside friends, cheering and promising. It meets its share, as well, of critics and cross-questioners,—doctors learned in the law and chiefs of administration, eager to send it back to the fastnesses of the rural valleys from which it came. It is not till, in the gray of a cold morning, after a night of tears and horror, there meet together in some garden of a new life some child of God, all broken with despair, and the other child of God, who is eager in the Father's work,—it is not till then that the true new life asserts itself, and, for the repentant, new hope comes in.

Our Easter rejoicings of next week are but painted upholstery, unless we be thus enlisted in the King's work for weal and for woe. Who seeks a lesson in Palm Sunday and in Passion Week must learn that lesson of manly, of womanly endurance,—that victory is not in the shouting or in the multitude. The real victory is sure when a loyal child, for darkness or for light, for death or for resurrection, goes steadily about his Father's business.

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